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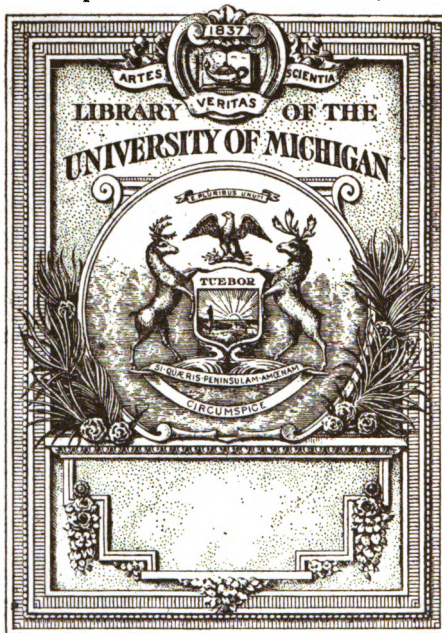
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MADONNA DIANORA

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MADONNA DIANORA

La demente: "Conosci la storia di Madonna Dianora?"

Il medico: "Vagamente. Non ricordo più." . . .

Sogno d'un mattino di primavera.

The garden of a sombre Lombardian Palace. To the right, the wall of a house, which is at an angle with the moderately high garden wall that encloses it. The lower portion of the house is built of rough granite, above which rests a strip of plain marble forming a sill which, under each window, is adorned with a lion's head in repose. Two windows are visible, each one having a small angular balcony with a stone railing, spaced sufficiently to show the feet of those standing there. Both windows are curtained to the floor. The garden is a mere lawn with a few scattered fruit trees. The corner of the garden between the wall and the house is crowded with high boxwood bushes. A leafy grapevine, trained over stunted chestnut-trees forms an arbor which completely fills the left side of the stage; only its entrance is visible. The arbor slants irregularly to the left rear. Behind the rear wall there may be seen (by the gallery spectator) a narrow path beyond which is the neighbor's garden wall—

no house is visible. In the neighbor's garden and as far as the eye can reach, the tops of the trees are illuminated by the evening glow of a brilliant sunset.

DIANORA

(At rear window.)

A harvester I see, and not the last
No, not the last, descending from the hill.
There are three more, and there, and there!
Have you no end, you never-ending day?
How have I dragged the hours away from you
Torn them to shreds and cast them in the flood
As I do now with these poor tattered blooms!
How have I coaxed each minute of this day!
Each bracelet and each earring was clasped on,
Ta'en off again, then once more tried, until
'Twas thrown aside, exchanged, and others
brought.—

I slowly dripped the fountain, drop on drop
All through my tresses, dried them languidly.
With quiet, measured step, out in the sun
I walked me to and fro—oh! to and fro!
But 'twas still damp—the path is narrow there.—
I looked among the bushes for the birds,—
Less than a zephyr's breath I bent them back,
Those swaying branches, sat 'neath rustling trees,
And felt on cheeks and hands in waiting woe

The little flickerings of warm sunshine.
I closed my eyes, and almost thought soft lips
Gently caressing, strayed my clammy brow.
Sometimes hours come when this duplicity,
All this concealment, seems so fruitless, and
I cannot bear it. I can only gaze
With eyes of steel far up into the sky
Where flocks of wild geese float, or bend me low
O'er some mad, rushing, plunging waterfall
That tears my weakling shadow with its flow.—
I will be patient—why, I must, I am!—
Madonna—I will climb the steepest mount
And on my knees will count me every stone
With this, my rosary, if only now,
Oh, soon—this day will sink into the night.
It is so long! I have its measured tread
With these same beads been scanning o'er and o'er.
And now I talk so fev'rishly, instead
Of counting all the leaves upon that tree.
Oh! I have finished much too soon again.
See! see the yeoman, calling to his dog.
The shadows do upon his garden fall,
For him the night has come, but brings no joy;
He fears it, locks his door and is alone.—
See where the maidens wander to the well.
I know the manner in which each of them
Will fill her bucket—that one's prettiest.
Why does the stranger at the cross roads stay?



Distant's his goal, I warrant. He unwinds
And folds again the cloth about his feet.
What an existence! Draw the thorns, yes draw
Them quickly out. You must speed. We all
Must hurry on, the restless day must down
And with it take this bright and scarlet glow
That's lingering in radiance on my cheeks.
All that is troubling us cast far away
Fling wide the thorn into the field
Where waters flow and sheaves of brilliant flow'rs
Are bending, glowing, yearning towards the
night.—

I draw my rings from off my fingers, and
They're happy as the naked children are
Who scamper quickly to the brook to bathe.—
Now all the girls have gone—
Only one maiden's left. Oh, what lovely hair!
I wonder if she knows its beauty's power?
Perhaps she's vain—but vanity, thou art
A plaything only for the empty years.
When once she has arrived where I am now,
She'll love her hair, she'll let it clasp her close
Enwrap her round and whisper to her low,
Like echoing harpstrings throbbing with the touch
Of fev'rish fingers straying in the dark

*(She loosens her hair and lets it fall to the left
and to the right in front of her.)*

NO

What would you close to *me*? Down, down with you!—

I bid you greet him. When the dusk has come,
And when his hand holds fast the ladder there
'A sudden he will feel, instead the leaves,
The cool, firm leaves, a gentle spraying rain,
A rain that falls at eve from golden clouds.

(She lets her hair fall over the balustrade.)

You are so long, and yet you barely reach
A third the distance; hardly are your ends
Touching the cold, white marble lion's nose.

(She laughs and rises.)

Ah! there's a spider! No, I will not fling
You off; I lay my hand once more
Upon this spot, so you may find again
The road you wish to speed so quickly on.
How I have changed! I am bewitched indeed!
In former days, I could not touch the fruit
Within a basket, if upon its edge
A spider had been seen. Now in my hand
It runs.—Intoxication makes me glad!
Why, I could walk along the very edge
Of narrow walls, and would not totter—no!—
Could I but fall into the waters deep!

In their cool velvet arms I would be well,
Gliding in grottoes of bright sapphire hues,
Playing with wondrous beings of the deep
All golden-finned, with eyes benignly sad.
Yes, if I were immured in thickest woods
Within some ruined walls, my soul were free.
For there the forest's animals would come
And tiny birds. The little weasels would
Brush up against and touch my naked toes
With their soft snouts and lashes of bright eyes
While in the moss I lay and ate wild fruit.—
What's rustling? 'Tis the little porcupine
Of that first night. What, are you there again,
Stepped from the dark? Art going on the hunt?
Oh! if my hunter would but come to me!

(Looking up.)

Now have the shadows vanished! Gone are all
Those of the pines and those upon the walls,
The ones that played about the little huts,
The large ones from the vineyards and the one
Upon the figtree at the crossroads—gone
As though the quiet earth had sucked them in!
The night has really come! The lamp
Is placed upon the table, closely press
The sheep together—close within the fold.
Within the darkest corners of the eaves

Where thickest vine-leaves meet, goblins do crouch
And on the heights from out the clearing step
The blessed saints to gaze where churches stand
Well pleased at seeing chapels manifold.
Now sweetest plaything you may also come,
Finer than spider's web, stronger than steel.

*(She fastens one end of the silk ladder to an iron
hook on the floor in the balcony.)*

Let me now play that it were highest time
And dip you deep down, down into my well,
To bring this parchéd one a sparkling draught.

(She pulls the ladder up again.)

Night, night has come! And yet how long might be,
Endlessly long, the time until he comes.

(She wrings her hands.)

Might be!

(With shining eyes)—

But must not—yet, it might—

(She puts up her hair. During this time the



nurse has stepped to the front window and waters the red flowers there.)

DIANORA

(Much frightened.)

Who's there, who's there! Oh, nurse, nurse, is it you? I've ne'er before seen you in here so late. Has aught occurred?—

NURSE

Why nothing, gracious one. Do you not see, I quite forgot my flowers—They've not been watered. On my way from church I suddenly remembered, quickly came.

DIANORA

Yes, give the flowers water. But how strange you look, your cheeks are feverish, your eyes are shining—

NURSE

(Does not answer.)

DIANORA

Who preached? Tell me, was it that monk, the one—

NURSE

(Curtly.)

Yes, gracious one.

DIANORA

The one from Spain, is't not?

NURSE

(Does not answer.)

(Pause.)

DIANORA

(Following her own train of thought.)

Can you recall the kind of child I was?

NURSE

Proud, gracious one, a proud child, very proud.

DIANORA

(Very softly.)

How singular! Humility's so sweet!—What?—

NURSE

I said no word, my gracious Lady, none—

DIANORA

Yes, yes, whom does the Spanish monk resemble?

NURSE

He is different from the others.

DIANORA

No—his appearance! Does he resemble my husband?

NURSE

No, gracious one.

DIANORA

My brother-in-law?

NURSE

No.

DIANORA

Ser Antonio Melzi?

NURSE

No.

DIANORA

Messer Galeazza Suardi?

NURSE

No.

DIANORA

Messer Palla degli Albizzi?

NURSE

His voice is a little like Messer Palla's—yes—I said to my son yesterday, that his voice reminded me a little of Messer Palla's voice.

DIANORA

The voice—

NURSE

But his eyes are like Messer Guido Schio, the
nephew of our gracious lord.

DIANORA

(Is silent.)

NURSE

I met him on the stairs yesterday—he stopped—

DIANORA

(Suddenly flaring up.)

Messer Palla?

NURSE

No! Our gracious lord. He ordered me to
make him some ointment. His wound is not yet
entirely healed.

DIANORA

Oh yes! The horse's bite—did he show it to you?

NURSE

Yes—the back of the hand is quite healed, but on the palm there's a small dark spot, a curious spot, such as I've never seen in a wound—

DIANORA

What horse did it, I wonder?

NURSE

The big roan, gracious Lady.

DIANORA

Yes, yes, I remember. It was on the day of Francesco Chieregati's wedding.

(She laughs loudly.)

NURSE

(Looks at her.)

DIANORA

I was thinking of something else. He told about it at table—he wore his arm in a sling. How was it, do you remember?

NURSE

What, gracious one?

DIANORA

With the horse—

NURSE

Don't you remember, gracious one?

DIANORA

He spoke about it at table. But I could not hear it. Messer Palla degli Albizzi sat next to me, and was so merry, and everybody laughed, and so I could not hear just what my husband said.

NURSE

When our gracious lord came to the stall, the

roan put back his ears, foamed with rage and suddenly snapped at the master's hand.

DIANORA

And then?

NURSE

Then the master hit the roan behind the ears with his fist, so that the big, strong horse staggered back, as though it were a dog—

DIANORA

(Is silent, looks dreamily down.)

NURSE

Oh our gracious lord is strong! He is the strongest gentleman of all the nobility the country 'round, and the cleverest.

DIANORA

Yes, indeed. *(Attentively now.)* Who?

NURSE

Our master.

DIANORA

Ah! our master. (*Smiles*)—and his voice is so beautiful, and that is why everybody loves to listen to him in the large, dark church.

NURSE

Listen to whom, gracious one?

DIANORA

To the Spanish monk, to whom else?

NURSE

No, my Lady, it isn't because of his voice that people listen to him.

DIANORA

(Is again not listening.)

NURSE

Gracious one—my Lady—is it true—what people say about the envoy?

DIANORA

What envoy?

NURSE

The envoy whom the people of Como sent to our master.

DIANORA

What are people saying?

NURSE

They say a shepherd saw it.

DIANORA

What did he see?

NURSE

travels | Our gracious lord was angry at the envoy and would not accept the letter that the people of Como had written him. Then he took it anyhow—the letter—read a part of it, tore it into bits and held the pieces before the envoy's mouth and demanded that he swallow them. But the envoy went backwards, like a crab, and made stary eyes just like a crab, and everybody laughed, especially Signor Silvio, the master's brother. Then the master sent



for the envoy's mule and had it brought to the gates. When the envoy was too slow in mounting, the master whistled for the dogs. The envoy left with his two yeomen. Our master went hunting with seven men and all the dogs. Towards evening, however, they say that our gracious lord and the envoy met at the bridge over the Adda, there where Varese begins—our master and the envoy met. And the shepherd was passing and drove his sheep next to the bridge into a wheatfield—so that the horses would not kill them. And the shepherd heard our master cry "There's the one who wouldn't eat, perhaps he'd like to drink." So four of our men seized the two yeomen, two others took the envoy, each one took hold of a leg, lifted him from the saddle and threw him screaming like a madman and struggling fiercely, over the parapet—he tore out a piece of the sleeve of one, together with the flesh. The Adda has very steep banks at that place—the river was dark and swollen from all the rain in the mountains. The envoy did not appear again, said the shepherd.

(Nurse stops, looks questioningly at Dianora.)

DIANORA

(Anxiously.)

I do not know.

(She shakes off the worried expression, her face assumes the dreamy, inwardly happy expression.)

Tell me something about his preaching—the Spaniard's preaching.

NURSE

I don't know how to express it, gracious one.

DIANORA

Say just a little. Does he preach of so many things?

NURSE

No, almost always about one thing.

DIANORA

What?

NURSE

Of resignation to the Lord's will.

DIANORA

(Looks at her and nods.)

NURSE

Gracious one, you must understand, that is all.

DIANORA

What do you mean by—all—

NURSE

(While speaking, she is occupied with the flowers.)

He says that all of life is in that—there's nothing else. He says everything is inevitable and that's the greatest joy—to realize that everything is inevitable and that is good, and there is no other good. The sun must glow, the stone must lie on the dumb earth and every living creature must give utterance to its voice—whether we will or no—we must—

DIANORA

(Is thinking—like a child.)

NURSE

(Goes from window.)

(Pause.)

DIANORA.

As though 'twere mirrored in a placid pool
Self-prisoned lies the world asleep, adream—
The ivy's tendrils clamber through the dusk
Closely embracing thousandfold the wall.
An arbor vitæ towers. At its feet
The quiet waters mirror what they see.
And from this window, on this balustrade
Of cool and heavy stones, I bend me o'er
Stretching my arms so they may touch the ground.
I feel as though I were a dual being
Gazing within me at my other self.

(Pause.)

Methinks such thoughts crowd in upon the soul
When grim, inexorable death is near.

(She shudders and crosses herself.)

NURSE

(Has returned several times to the window; in

one hand she carries scissors with which she clips the dry branches from the plants.)

My task is done, so good night, gracious one.

DIANORA

(Startled.)

What? Good night, nurse, farwell. I'm dizzy, faint.

NURSE

(Goes off.)

DIANORA

(With a great effort.)

Nurse! nurse!

NURSE

(Comes back.)

DIANORA

If the Spanish monk preaches tomorrow, I'll go with you.

NURSE

Yes, tomorrow, my Lady, if the Lord spare us.

DIANORA

(Laughs.)

Certainly—if the Lord spare us. Good night.

(A long pause.)

DIANORA

His voice is all he has, the stranger monk,
Yet people flock, hang on his words like bees
Upon the dark sweet blossoms, and they say
"This man is not like others—he
Does shake our souls, his voice melts into space
Floats down to us and penetrates our being—
We are like children when we hear his voice."—
Oh, if a Judge could have his lofty brow,
Who would not kneel upon the steps to read
Each sentence from his clear and shining brow.
How sweet to kneel upon the lowest step
And know one's fate were safe within that hand,
Within those kingly, good and noble hands!

* * * * *



And oh, his merriment! How exquisite!
To see such people merry is a joy.
—He took me by the hand and drew me on.
My blood ran magic, backward stretched my hand.
The laughing throng upon it closely hung
A sinuous chain, we flew 'long arbored walks
Down through a deep and steep and narrow path
Cool as a well, and bordered very close
With cypresses that lived a century—
Then down the brightest slope.
Up to my knees the wild, warm flowers kissed
Where we were running like a breeze in May.
Then he released me, and alone he leapt
Upon the marble stairs between cascades.
Astride he sat upon the dolphin's back
And held himself up on the arms of fauns,
Upon the dripping Tritons' shoulders stood
Mounting always; high, higher still he clomb,
The wildest, handsomest of all the gods!—
Beneath his feet the waters bubbled forth
They sparkled, foamed, and showered the air with
spray,
Falling on me. The waves' tumultuous din
Drowned out, engulfed the entire world.
Beneath his feet the waters bubbled forth
They sparkled, foamed and showered their spray on
me.

(Pause—Footsteps are heard in the distance.)

DIANORA

Sh! Footsteps! No, it is so much too soon—
And yet—and yet—(*long waiting*) they come.

(Pause.)

They do not come—
Oh, no, they do not come—They're shuffling steps,
They shuffle down the vineyard—now they reel—
There are the steps! A drunkard, verily!
Stay on the street, intoxicated one
What would you do within our garden gates?—
No moon shines here tonight—were there a moon
I were not here—no, no I were *not* here.
The little stars are flick'ring restlessly,
They cannot light the way for such as you—
Go home! I too wait for a drunken one,
But one not drunken from a musty wine.
His footsteps are as light as wind on grass
And surer than the tread of the young lion.

(Pause.)

These hours are martyrdom! No, no, no, no,
They're not—no, they are beautiful and good

And lovely and so sweet! He comes, he comes!
A long, long way already he has walked—
The last tall tree down there has seen him come—
It could—if that dark strip of woodland boughs
Did not obscure the road—and 'twere not dark—

(*Pause.*)

He comes—as certainly as I do now
Upon this hook bind this frail ladder—comes,
As surely as I now do let it down
In rustling murmur in the leaves enmeshed,
As certainly as it now swaying hangs,
Quivering softly, as I bend me low
Myself aquiver with a greater thrill—

(She remains for a long time bent over the balustrade. Suddenly she seems to hear the curtain between her balcony and the room thrown back. She turns her head and her features are distorted in deathly fear and terror. Messer Braccio stands silently in the door. He wears a simple, dark green robe, carries no weapons—his shoes are low. He is very tall and strong. His face resembles the portraits of aristocrats and captains of mercenaries. He has an extremely large forehead and small dark eyes, closely cropped, curly black hair, and a small beard that covers his cheeks and chin.)

DIANORA

(Wants to speak but is unable to utter a sound.)

MESSER BRACCIO

(Beckons to her to pull up the ladder.)

DIANORA

(Does so like an automaton and drops the bundle, as in a trance, at her feet.)

BRACCIO

(Looks at her quietly, reaches with his right hand to his left hip, also with his left hand; notices that he has no dagger. He moves his lips impatiently, glances toward the garden, then over his shoulders. He lifts his right hand for a moment and examines his palm, then walks firmly and quietly back into the room.)

DIANORA

(Looks after him incessantly; she cannot take her eyes away from him. As the curtain closes behind his retreating form, she passes her fingers excitedly

over her face and through her hair, then folds her hands and murmurs a prayer, her lips wildly convulsed. Then she throws her arms backwards and folds them about the stone pillar, in a gesture that indicates a desperate resolve and a triumphant expectancy.)

BRACCIO

(Steps into the doorway again carrying an arm-chair, which he places in the opening of the door. He seats himself on it, facing his wife. His face does not change. From time to time he raises his right hand mechanically and examines the little wound upon its palm.)

BRACCIO

(His tone is cold, rather disdainful. He points with his foot and eyes to the ladder.)

Who?

DIANORA

(Raises her shoulders, and drops them slowly.)

BRACCIO

I know!

DIANORA

*(Raises her shoulders and drops them slowly.
Her teeth are clenched.)*

BRACCIO

*(Moves his hand, barely glances at his wife and
looks again into the garden.)*

Palla degli Albizzi!

DIANORA

(Between her teeth.)

How ugly the most beautiful of names
Becomes when uttered by unseemly tongue.

BRACCIO

*(Looks at her as though he were about to speak,
but remains silent.)*

(Pause.)

BRACCIO

How old are you?

DIANORA

(Does not answer.)

BRACCIO

Fifteen and five. You are twenty years old.

DIANORA

*(Does not answer.)**(Pause.)*

DIANORA

(Almost screaming.)

My father's name was Bartholomeno Colleone—
you can let me say the Lord's Prayer and the Hail
Mary, and then kill me, but not let me stand here
like a fettered beast.

BRACCIO

*(Looks at her as though surprised, does not
answer—glances at his hand.)*

DIANORA

*(Strokes back her hair slowly, folds her elbows
over her breast, stares at him, then drops her arms,*

seems to divine his plan. Her voice is completely changed and is like a string that is stretched to the breaking-point.)

One of my women I desire, who will—

(She stops; her voice seems to give out.)

First braid my hair—'tis tangled—disarranged.

BRACCIO

You often help yourself without a maid.

DIANORA

(Presses her lips together, says nothing, smooths her hair at the temples, folds her hands.)

I have no children. My mother I saw once—

I saw her once, just once before she died.

My father led me and my sister to

A vaulted, high, severe and gloomy room.

The sufferer I saw not; her hand alone

Hung like a greeting for me—that I kissed.

About my father I remember this:

He wore an armor of green burnished gold

With darker clasps—two always helped him mount

Upon his horse, for he was very old.—
I hardly knew Medea. Not much joy
Had she, my sister. Thin of hair,
Her forehead and her temples older seemed,
Much older, than her mouth and hands to me.
She always held a flower in her hand.—
Oh Lord, have mercy unto these sweet souls
As unto mine, and bid them welcome me
Greeting me kindly when I come to Thee.
I cannot kneel—there is no space to kneel.

BRACCIO

*(Rises, pushes the chair into the room to make
space for her. She does not notice him.)*

DIANORA

There's more—I must remember—Bergamo
Where I was born—the house in Feltre where
The uncles and the cousins were
Then they put me upon a gallant steed
Caparisoned most splendidly—they rode,
Cousins and many others by my side.
And so I came here, from whence now I go

*(She has leaned back and looks up at the glitter-
ing stars upon the black sky—she shudders.)*

I wanted something else—

(She searches her memory.)

In Bergamo where I was taught to walk
 Upon the path that brought me here, I erred
 Often—most frequently through pride, and now
 I am contrite and would go to confession
 For all those errors, and some graver ones:—
 When I (*she ponders*)—three days after Saint
 Magdalen

Was riding homeward from the chase with him,
 This man here, who's my husband—others too—
 Upon the bridge an old lame beggar lay.
 I knew that he was old and ill and sore
 And there was something in his tired eyes
 Reminded me of my dead father—but
 Nevertheless—only because the one
 Riding beside me touched my horse's bridle,
 I did not pull aside, but let the dust
 My horse kicked up, blind, choke that poor old man.
 Yes, so close I rode that with his hands
 He had to lift aside his injured leg.
 This I remember, this I now regret.

BRACCIO

The one beside you held your horse's bridle?

(He looks at her.)

DIANORA

(Answers his look, understands him, says trenchantly.)

Yes! Then, as often since—as often since—
And yet how rarely after all!
How meagre is all joy—a shallow stream
In which you're forced to kneel, that it may reach
Up to your shoulders—

BRACCIO

Of my servants who,—of all your women, who
knew of these things?

DIANORA

(Is silent.)

BRACCIO

(Makes a disdainful gesture.)

DIANORA

Falsely, quite falsely you interpret now
My silence. How can I tell who might know?—

But if you think that I am one of those
Who hides behind her hirelings her joy,
You know me ill. Now note—note and take heed:
Once may a woman be—yes, once she may
Be as I was for twelve weeks—once she may—
If she had found no need of veil before,
All veiled, protected by her own great pride
As by a shield—she once may rend that veil,
Feel her cheeks crimson, burning in the sun!
Horrible she, who twice could such a thing!
I'm not of those—that surely you must know.
Who knew? Who guessed? I never hid my
thoughts!
Your brother must have known—just as you knew,
Your brother just as you. Ask him, ask him!

*(Her voice is strange, almost childlike, yet ex-
alted.)*

That day—'twas in July, Saint Magdalen,
Francesco Chierigati's wedding-day—
That nasty thing upon your hand came then,
Came on that day. Well, I remember too.
We dined out in the arbor—near the lake,
And he sat next to me, while opposite
Your brother sat. Then passing me the fruit
Palla did hold the heavy golden dish
Of luscious peaches so that I might take.

My eyes were fastened on his hands—I longed
To humbly kiss his hands, there,—before all.
Your brother—he’s malicious and no fool—
Caught this my glance, and must have guessed my
thought.

He paled with anger.—Sudden came a dog,
A tall dark greyhound brushed his slender head
Against my hand,—the left one by my side,—
Your stupid brother kicked in furious rage
With all his might, the dog—only because
He could not with a shining dagger pierce
Me and my lover. I but looked at him,
Caressed and stroked the dog, and had to laugh!

*(She laughs immoderately and shrilly in a way
that threatens to become a scream, or to break into
tears at any moment.)*

BRACCIO

(Seems to listen.)

DIANORA

*(Also listens. Her face expresses horrible tension.
Soon she cannot bear it and begins to speak
again almost deliriously.)*

Why whosoever saw me walk would know!
Walked I not differently? Did not I ride

Ecstatically? I could look at you
And at your brother and this gloomy house
And feel as light as air, floating in space.
The myriad trees seemed all to come to me
Filled with the sunlight dancing toward me,
All paths were open in the azure air—
Those sunlit paths were all the roads to him.
To start with fright was sweet—he might appear
From any corner, any bush or tree—

(Her language becomes incoherent from terror, because she sees that Braccio has drawn the curtains behind him close. Her eyes are unnaturally wide open—her lips move constantly.)

BRACCIO

(In a tone that the actor must find for himself, not loud, not low, not strong nor yet weak, but impenetrating.)

If I, your husband, had not at this hour
Come to your chamber to fetch me a salve,
An ointment for my wounded hand—what would—
What had you done, intended, meant to do?

DIANORA

(Looks at him, as though distraught, does not

understand his latest question. Her right hand presses her forehead—with the left she shakes the ladder before his face, lets it fall at his feet, one end remains tied, shrieks.)

What had I done? What had I done, you ask?
Why waited thus—I would have waited—so!

(She sways her open arms before him like one intoxicated, throws herself around, with the upper part of her body over the balustrade, stretches her arms towards the ground—her hair falls over them.)

BRACCIO

(With a hurried gesture tears off a piece of his sleeve and winds it around his right hand. With the sureness of a wild animal on the hunt, he grasps the ladder that is lying there, like a thin, dark rope, with both hands, makes a loop, throws it over his wife's head and pulls her body towards him.

(During this time the curtain falls.)

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